

Mark Your Calendar!

The **Alberta Parks Volunteer Conference** will be held in **Slave Lake** on **Sept 9-11** this year. Join fellow PA stewards for field trips and information sessions, hosted by Alberta Environment & Parks.

Join us for the **SAPAA Annual Workshop and AGM** on **Oct 15th** at the Red Deer Centre. (See more info below.) We look forward to sharing important updates and information as well as discussions with fellow stewards.

Poplar Creek NA Field Trip

On 16 July 2016, a group of 8 people (including 5 members of the Alberta Mycological Society, the Area's official Steward) visited Poplar Creek Natural Area.



Searching for mushrooms and other flora

The area lies about 3 km west of Breton (80 km southwest of Edmonton), and includes 5 scattered parcels of land: Range 5 Township 47 Section 20SE and Range 5 Township 48, Sections 11, 14SW, 14NE and 17NE. In all, it covers 8 quarter sections, 5 with Order-In-Council (OC) and 3 with Protective Notation (PNT) status. For more details go to "Protected Areas" at sapaastewards.com or visit the government site at albertaparks.ca. It's interesting that Alberta Parks describes only the OC portions of our Natural Areas, and these are also the only areas shown on Google Maps.

All of the parcels in Poplar Creek NA seem to be largely undisturbed. None have maintained trails, so our exploration was mainly following moose trails or bush-whacking, and included crossing a stream on a beaver dam to reach Section 14NE.



Pieter leads the way across the beaver dam

The only disturbance we saw was a dumped oil barrel (contents unknown) in the northwest corner of Section 11. This was later brought to the attention of the authorities and speedily removed. The field trip visited the PNT Sections 11W and 14NE. Section 11W was especially remarkable, because it features the confluence of 3 unnamed streams that form Poplar Creek and ultimately join Modeste Creek, the focal point of another NA.



Widespread stiff clubmoss
(*Lycopodium annotinum*)



Fruiting spotted coralroot
(*Corallorhiza maculata*)

Most noteworthy on this trip were the multitude and variety of mushrooms in all habitats, probably due to the unusually rainy weather since mid-May. While part of the group did the geographic tour of Poplar Creek NA, others, led by Martin Osis and Bill and Diane Richards combed the woods for mushrooms. By the end of the morning, the collectors' large baskets were brimming full. The search put a whole new perspective on forest diversity. The expert spotting of our guides yielded everything from the tiny little Mycenas with their Chinese hats for caps, to the medium-

sized *Entoloma grande*, to the large white plates of *Leucopaxillus*; from the tiny orange dots of slime molds to delicate frozen waterfalls of white coral fungi (*Hericium* sp.) to the tough polypore conks. Over 45 types of mushrooms were identified to genus or species. Martin and Bill also noted that different suites of species appear in different years.



Bill Richards & his basket



King bolete, ready to pick

Some of the fungi were especially memorable. The little *Mycena* fungus looks like white dots on the forest floor, and there was also a luminous pink one. Each tiny fungus, no bigger than a couple of centimeters, was attached by a tiny cluster of mycelium (“fuzzy foot”) to a dead spruce needle, on which it was feeding. Another intriguing find was *Phellinus punctatus*, a polypore that forms a velvety brown sleeve on old alder and willow limbs. Bill said it produced hard, brown masses (sclerotia) that he made into tea. We also found a better known source of medicinal tea, the chaga mushroom (*Inonotus obliquus*) (check online for videos on how to brew it!). Bill showed us the



White coral fungus



Chaga mushroom mycelium on birch

non-fruiting fungus (mycelium) on a birch, a long, black scar where the bark had been peeled back by the infection. We were pleased to discover the

delicious king bolete (*Boletus edulis*) with its brownish cap and massive stalk. Also edible were the distinctive pig’s ears (*Gomphus clavatus*), which we found in Pieter’s woods, growing in association with spruce and fir roots.



Pig’s ears mushroom (*Gomphus clavatus*)



The rare Clinton’s bulrush (*Tricophorum clintonii*)

All of these fungi play important roles in maintaining the life of the forest. Some are saprophytes, decomposing dead organic matter; others are parasites, able to invade living cells and kill plants, thereby creating space for different species to grow; still others coat or penetrate plant roots, enhancing the absorption of water and minerals from the soil and sharing the green plants’ carbohydrates produced by photosynthesis. The diversity can be daunting; it takes years of study to know mushrooms with enough confidence to recognize and eat the edible ones. But a day out with expert mycologists can certainly give you a leg-up on the fascinating field of mycology! The trip was hosted by Pieter van der Schoot, whose property lies adjacent to the NA. Everyone benefitted from his intimate knowledge of local geography and flora. Many thanks to Pieter and other AMS members for looking after this area and making the outing such a memorable success.

Hubert Taube & Patsy Cotterill

Central Region Stewards’ Meeting, 10 Aug 2016

The first stewards’ meeting of the year was directed at stewards of Natural Areas in the Central Region of Alberta. The Parks Branch now administers 5 regions in AB: Northeast, Northwest, Central, South and Kananaskis. The Central Region covers a belt from the

Willmore/Siffleur Wilderness Areas in the west to the Saskatchewan border in the east, including Edmonton and Red Deer and parts of several Land Use Framework zones.

The 24 participants included 5 Parks staff and 11 SAPAA members. Coral Grove remains the Provincial Steward Coordinator, and semi-annual Inspection Reports for individual sites should be sent to her. What's new is that day-to-day activities (such as sign posting, fence erection, trail building, reports of rule violations ...) should be dealt with by contacting the Regional Steward Coordinator. For the Central Region this is Sam Halabi (sam.halabi@gov.ab.ca; 780-960-8170 ext: 229), assisted by Land Use Officers Mike Weyer and Tom Sutherland. Alison Cole is the new Volunteer Coordinating Officer.

The number of provincial sites with volunteer stewards (individuals or groups) stands at about 130 (OC and PNT sites). In the Central Region, 75 (over 50%) of the provincial sites have stewards. The number of volunteers has remained relatively static in recent years. Applications for volunteer positions are accepted (by online application), but we were told that the number of sites that the current Parks staff can manage is the limiting factor for approving applications.

The future of the Protected Areas' organization was discussed briefly. Parks staff is working on restructuring the WAERNAHR system along the IUCN lines (as proposed by Guy Swinnerton). Under this system the designation "Natural Area" would disappear. However, political initiatives are required to introduce new Parks Legislation for this system to become reality. At present, regulations for WAERNAHR sites are not much different than those for general Public Lands. The public land regulations, updated Aug 8th, are at <http://aep.alberta.ca/lands-forests/public-lands-administration-regulation/plar-specified-penalty-amounts.aspx>. These regulations apply strictly to Public Land Use Zones, and they would be upheld in the WAERNAHR Protected Areas. Based on these regulations, violators can be ticketed in the field by Conservation Officers. (Conservation Officers have returned to the Environment and Parks Ministry from the Department of Justice). This has resulted in an increased number of staff in the field, and members of the audience noted

that the number of infractions in Natural Areas has significantly decreased.

Guy Swinnerton reported that the Beaver Hills Initiative (BHI) has been successful and that the area is now a recognized IUCN Biosphere Reserve. Guy cautioned that much work must continue to be done to maintain this prestigious designation for the area, which contains five Natural Areas and other protected areas and encompasses several administrative jurisdictions.

Hubert Taube

SAPAA Field Trip Hat Trick

On June 4th, the SAPAA field trip started off with breakfast, bird banding and nature walks at the Beaverhill NA, organized by the area's Group Steward, the Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO).



Fresh crepes, fruit & bacon with hot coffee - delicious!

Geoff Holroyd, Helen Trefry and numerous volunteers hosted our group along with many other natural history enthusiasts from Edmonton, Sherwood Park and the surrounding area. As expected, birding was the focus, and with mist netting and bird banding demonstrations, visitors were given the opportunity to have the proverbial bird in hand – specifically Yellow Warblers, Least Flycatchers and Nuthatches.



Head Biologist, Kevin Methuen takes a warbler from the mist net



A freshly banded nuthatch chick

It was encouraging to see water spilling over the weir at Lister Lake – perhaps Beaverhill Lake will have water sometime soon. Beaverhill NA has had some issues with illegal off-road vehicle use, but given the intensive use of the area by the BBO, it hasn't got out of hand. The research done by BBO is internationally recognized for its excellence. From Beaverhill Lake, the group travelled east to “Upsandowns”, home of Phil and Helen Trefry, who provided coffee and tea to go with our bag lunches. Phil then gave a tour of their raptor rearing facility. The Trefrys ran the Canadian Wildlife Service Peregrine Recovery facility at Wainwright, and brought some of the breeders with them when the centre was closed in 1996.



Chicks and an adult peregrine at the Trefrys'

After lunch, the group crossed the road to the Parkland NA, of which the Fort Saskatchewan Naturalist Society is Group Steward. Everyone helped in the search for plants and animals during a 2-hour walk through the area, and this produced a lengthy list of 42 bird and >140 plant species. There are numerous wetlands with surrounding aspen upland forests, so species diversity is good. Yellow lady's slipper orchids were a highlight for the botanically inclined, while the Gray Catbird and Northern Oriole kept the birders atwitter.



Bird-watching at one of the larger ponds in Parkland NA



Pelicans & a Cormorant take off at Hastings Lake

Finally, some of the group drove east to Hastings Lake NA (Linda & Peter Kershaw stewards). It was getting late, so we limited our visit to the lake shore and a nearby small bog. We scared up a Rough Grouse as we entered the bog, where the Labrador-tea was blooming over a carpet of club moss and sphagnum. On the lake, we saw Grebes, Pelicans, Cormorants, and a variety of ducks. The day began early and ended late, but the group successfully visited 3 Natural Areas. There are many other protected areas in the region, but they will have to wait for another time.

For more detailed information about these NAs, go to “Protected Areas” at sapaastewards.com

Peter and Linda Kershaw

Halfmoon Lake NA Update

On July 9th, Richard and Vera deSmet led another successful field trip at Halfmoon Lake NA, along a route that included some recently constructed, single-file trails. ATV abuse at the site has declined dramatically since conservation officers began patrolling the area. At one point along the trail we heard the sound of ATVs and Richard braced himself for an awkward confrontation, but was relieved to find that it was 2 COs; so instead he could express gratitude for their presence!

Possibly, Richard's recent letter to the Minister of the Environment and Parks, complaining about ATV abuse, was a factor in garnering this monitoring attention. On a visit to the east side of the Natural Area on August 20th (at the public entrance), there was no sign of ATV use on the trails.

Can this promising situation not extend to other natural areas?

Patsy Cotterill



STEWARDS OF ALBERTA'S PROTECTED AREAS ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, October 15, 2016

at 9:00 a.m.

Kerry Wood Nature Centre, Red Deer, AB

PROGRAM

- 9:00 a.m. Registration and coffee
- 9:30 a.m. Speaker: **Alison Ronson, M.A.**
Northern Alberta Executive Director, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society
Title: **CPAWS 2015 Conservation Blueprint for Northern Alberta**
- 10:15 a.m. Questions and discussion
- 10:30 a.m. Coffee Break (coffee, etc. provided but bring your own mug if you can)
- 11:00 a.m. Speaker: **Geoff Holroyd, PhD.**
Chair, Beaverhill Bird Observatory
Title: **Beaverhill Natural Area & Bird Observatory: Conservation by a SAPAA member**
- 11:45 a.m. Questions and discussion
- 12:00 noon **Lunch** (Please bring your own lunch, as kitchen facilities are limited)
- 12:30 p.m. **SAPAA Annual General Meeting** (see agenda on reverse)
- 2:00 p.m. **Walk in the Park** – Enjoy some fresh air and exercise before heading home. Join us for a walk around the beautiful trails in the Gaetz Lake Sanctuary or a tour of the J.J. Collett Natural Area.



**STEWARDS OF ALBERTA'S PROTECTED AREAS ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Saturday, 15 October 2016, 12:30 p.m.**

AGENDA

1. Acceptance of Minutes of previous AGM, 17 October 2015
2. Business arising from the minutes
3. Treasurer's report
4. SAPAA web site update
5. Election of the Board

Current board members are:

President – Hubert Taube

Vice President –vacant

Treasurer / Membership Secretary – Peter Kershaw

Recording Secretary – Patsy Cotterill

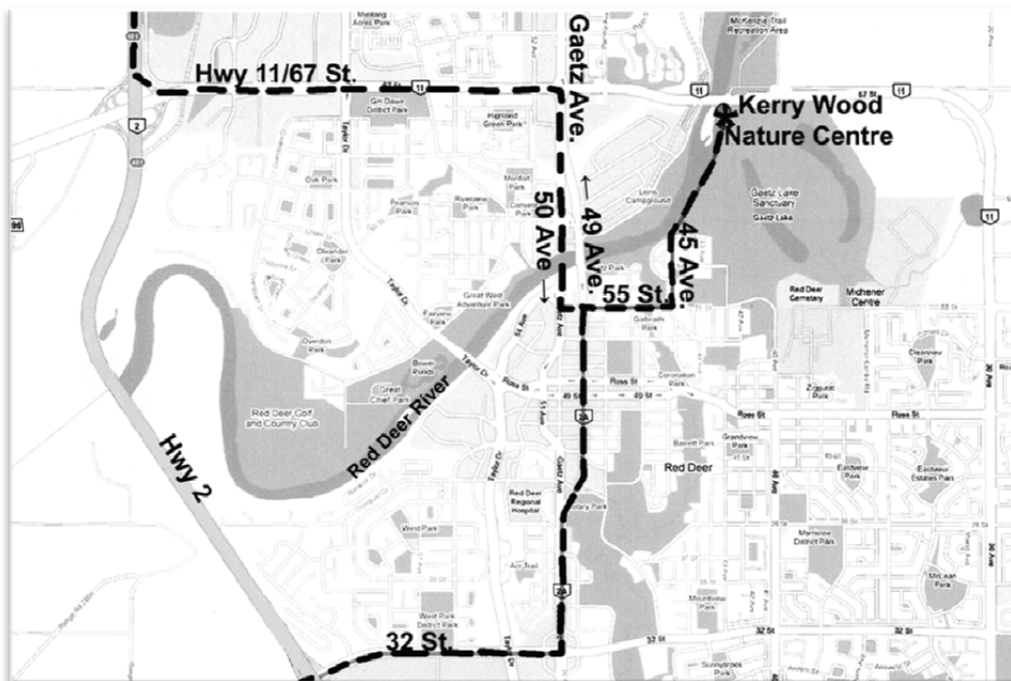
Directors – John Woitenko (FAN Representative); Alison Dinwoodie

Newsletter Editors – Linda Kershaw, Patsy Cotterill

Webmaster – Linda Kershaw

Please consider helping out on the executive. Some members are willing to stand for another year, but some are stepping down. New people would be welcomed!

6. Other business



DIRECTIONS: To reach the Kerry Wood Nature Centre from **Highway 2**, take the **67 St.** exit in Red Deer and then turn **right (south) onto Gaetz Ave.** (50 Ave.). Turn **left (east) on 55 St.**, then **left (north) on 45 Ave.** Follow this until you see the Kerry Wood Nature Centre on your right.

OR, Take the **32 Street** exit and then turn **left (north) on Gaetz Ave.** Go north, through the one-way system, and turn **right (east) onto 55 Street.** Turn **left (north) onto 45 Ave.** and proceed to the Nature Centre as before.

Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association Membership Form

Name: _____ Date: _____

Natural Area: _____ Organization (if any) _____

Mailing Address: _____ City or Town: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

- **To save paper and reduce costs, may we email your newsletter to you?** ____ yes ____ no
- Would you be willing to have your name and phone number put on a list that would only be distributed to other SAPAA members? ____ Yes ____ No

Renewing membership ____; New member ____

Membership fee \$ 15 (Includes FAN insurance fee of \$5)

Donation (Optional)* _____
TOTAL _____

*SAPAA is not a registered Charitable Organization as yet, so receipts for income tax purposes cannot be issued.

Please return this form, with total listed above to:

Peter Kershaw, 51163 Range Road 204, Sherwood Park, AB T8G 1E5

(Make cheques payable to SAPAA)

For membership conditions, please see reverse side of this form.

Issues of importance (old or new – this info would help for future Stewards Conference discussions):

___ Oil / Gas ___ Off Highway Vehicles ___ Vandalism ___ Overuse/Abuse ___ Grazing
___ Other _____

Willing to help with: ___ Newsletter ___ Executive ___ Phoning ___ Speakers ___ Meetings ___ Field Trips ___ Other

If you are a new member, please provide the following details about your Stewardship Area:

Natural Area ID #: _____ Approximate size: _____

Location: _____

Brief description of significant natural features (please include a brochure if available): _____

If you require more information, please contact

Patsy Cotterill – (780)481-1525; nutmeg@planet.eon.net
Alison Dinwoodie – (780)437-7183; adinwoodie@shaw.ca
Peter & Linda Kershaw – (780)662-3626; linda.kershaw1@gmail.com

STEWARDS OF ALBERTA'S PROTECTED AREAS ASSOCIATION

Membership in SAPAA is open to anyone who

- **is a Steward who volunteers time assisting in the care and management of Alberta's Protected Areas (i.e., lands currently set aside under the Alberta Provincial Parks Act, the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas & Heritage Rangeland Act, and the Willmore Wilderness Act), and**
- **is in general agreement with the following Purposes of the Association.**

Purposes of the Association

1. To establish a network of Volunteer Stewards to exchange information and expertise and to provide mutual assistance and support.
2. To promote the preservation, protection and restoration of the ecological integrity of Alberta's Protected Areas.
3. To promote the use of Alberta's Protected Areas for educational and research purposes, and for non-intrusive, nature-oriented activities compatible with each individual site.
4. To identify common issues of concern in Alberta's Protected Areas for the purpose of dealing with them more effectively and comprehensively.
5. To work with appropriate government departments and with other groups and agencies to resolve issues regarding actions and activities that affect Alberta's Protected Areas.
6. To represent members of the Association at meetings of stakeholders and in events, issues and situations that affect Alberta's Protected Areas.
7. To increase and enhance public awareness of the value of Protected Areas and of the Volunteer Stewards' role in preserving these areas.
8. To support knowledge and skill development for Stewards and supporters of the Association through conferences, workshops, seminars and publications.

Name (please print): _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____